

CLAIMS

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

- 1 1. A method for changing a benefit associated with a coupon, comprising:
2 establishing an initial benefit for a coupon;
3 establishing a benefit variation condition for said coupon, said benefit
4 variation condition having at least one associated qualifying action;
5 receiving notice of a completion of said at least one qualifying action;
6 and
7 updating said coupon's benefit in accordance with said benefit
8 variation condition.

- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said qualifying action is associated
2 with at least one of the following:
3 an initial recipient of said coupon;
4 a primary recipient of said coupon;
5 a secondary recipient of said coupon; and
6 a tertiary recipient of said coupon.

- 1 3. The method of claim 1, wherein said updated benefit of said coupon is
2 associated with a first recipient of said coupon and said qualifying action is associated
3 with a second recipient of said coupon.

- 1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said second recipient is a downstream
2 recipient of said first recipient.

- 1 5. The method of claim 3, further comprising:
2 providing an indication to said first recipient of a completion of
3 said qualifying action by said second recipient.

- 1 6. The method of claim 3, wherein said qualifying action includes at least
2 one of the following:

3 said second recipient registering said coupon;
4 said second recipient redeeming said coupon; or
5 said second recipient forwarding said coupon.

1 7. The method of claim 3, wherein said benefit variation condition has a
2 second associated qualifying action.

1 8. The method of claim 7, wherein said second qualifying action includes
2 at least one of the following:

3 said first recipient registering said coupon;
4 said first recipient redeeming said coupon; or
5 said first recipient forwarding said coupon.

1 9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 establishing at least one validity duration condition for said coupon.

1 10. The method of claim 9, wherein said coupon has one of the following:
2 a finite duration; or
3 an infinite duration.

1 11. The method of claim 1, wherein said notice of a completion of said at
2 least one qualifying action is considered to be received unless a notice is received that
3 said qualifying action has not been completed.

1 12. The method of claim 1, wherein said benefit variation condition
2 includes a validity duration condition for said coupon.

1 13. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving a request to update said coupon's benefit.

1 14. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 notifying a recipient of said coupon after updating said benefit of said
3 coupon.

1 16. The method of claim 1, wherein said coupon has an initial benefit
2 greater than or equal to zero.

1 17. The method of claim 1, wherein said establishing a benefit variation
2 condition associated with said coupon includes establishing a maximum benefit for
3 said coupon.

1 20. The method of claim 1, wherein said benefit variation conditions can
2 cause said coupon's benefit to be adjusted upon said receiving notice of a completion
3 of said at least one qualifying action.

1 21. The method of claim 1, wherein said qualifying action includes at least
2 one of the following:

3 a first recipient of said coupon forwarding said coupon to a second
4 recipient:

5 an initial recipient of said coupon receiving said coupon;

6 an initial recipient of said coupon registering said coupon;

7 an initial recipient of said coupon redeeming said coupon;

8 an initial recipient of said coupon forwarding said coupon;

9 a primary recipient of said coupon receiving said coupon;

0 a primary recipient of said coupon registering said coupon

1 a primary recipient of said coupon redeeming said coupon;

2 a primary recipient of said coupon forwarding said coupon;

3 a secondary recipient of said coupon receiving said coupon

4 a secondary recipient of said coupon registering said coupon

15 a secondary recipient of said coupon redeeming said coupon;
16 a secondary recipient of said coupon forwarding said coupon;
17 a tertiary recipient of said coupon receiving said coupon;
18 a tertiary recipient of said coupon registering said coupon;
19 a tertiary recipient of said coupon redeeming said coupon;
20 a tertiary recipient of said coupon forwarding said coupon;
21 a recipient of said coupon registering said coupon; or
22 a recipient of said coupon redeeming said coupon.

1 22. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 establishing an initial benefit for said coupon.

1 23. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 modifying said benefit variation condition.

1 24. The method of claim 1, wherein said qualifying action includes a
2 recipient of said coupon redeeming said coupon within a predetermined time period.

1 25. The method of claim 24, wherein said coupon's benefit changes a first
2 amount if said recipient of said coupon redeems said coupon within said
3 predetermined time period.

1 26. The method of claim 25, wherein said coupon's benefit changes a
2 second amount if said recipient of said coupon redeems said coupon after said
3 predetermined time period.

1 27. The method of claim 26, wherein said second amount is less than said
2 first amount.

1 28. The method of claim 24, wherein said coupon's benefit changes a first
2 amount if said recipient of said coupon registers said coupon within said
3 predetermined time period.

1 29. The method of claim 28, wherein said coupon's benefit changes a
2 second amount if said recipient of said coupon registers said coupon after said
3 predetermined time period.

1 34. The method of claim 1, wherein said coupon's benefit increases a first
2 amount if an initial recipient of said coupon forwards said coupon to a primary
3 recipient.

1 35. The method of claim 34, where said coupon's benefit increases a
2 second amount if said primary recipient of said coupon forwards said coupon to a
3 secondary recipient.

1 36. The method of claim 35, wherein said second amount is less than or
2 equal to said first amount.

1 37. The method of claim 35, where said coupon's benefit increases a third
2 amount if said secondary recipient of said coupon forwards said coupon to a tertiary
3 recipient.

1 38. The method of claim 37, wherein said third amount is less than or
2 equal to said second amount.

1 39. The method of claim 1, wherein said benefit variation condition
2 includes establishing a maximum benefit for said coupon.

1 40. The method of claim 1, wherein said benefit variation condition
2 associated with said coupon includes a recipient variable benefit assigned to a
3 redeemer of said coupon.

1 41. The method of claim 1, wherein said establishing a benefit variation
2 condition associated with said coupon includes establishing at least one recipient
3 variable benefit for a recipient of said coupon.

1 42. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 crediting a financial account associated with a recipient of said coupon
3 if said coupon's benefit increases after said recipient has redeemed said
4 coupon.

1 43. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 issuing a new coupon to a recipient of said coupon if said coupon's
3 benefit increases after said recipient has redeemed said coupon.

1 44. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 monitoring at least one of a number of recipients receiving said
3 coupon, registering said coupon, or redeeming said coupon.

1 45. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 modifying said benefit variation condition.

1 46. The method of claim 1, wherein said initial benefit is associated with a
2 recipient of said coupon.

1 47. The method of claim 1, wherein said initial benefit is based upon at
2 least one of the following:
3 a status of a recipient of said coupon;
4 a coupon registration history of a recipient of said coupon;

5 a coupon redemption history of a recipient of said coupon; and
6 a personal preference of a recipient of said coupon.

1 48. A method for varying a benefit associated with a coupon, comprising:
2 associating an initial benefit with a coupon;
3 establishing a first qualifying action associated with said coupon; and
4 changing said coupon's associated benefit a first amount upon
5 receiving notice of a completion of said first qualifying action.

1 49. The method of 48, further comprising:
2 providing said coupon to at least one initial recipient.
3

1 50. The method of 49, wherein said first qualifying action includes
2 forwarding of said coupon by said initial recipient to a primary recipient.

1 51. The method of claim 50, further comprising:
2 establishing a second qualifying action associated with said coupon.

1 52. The method of claim 51, further comprising:
2 changing said coupon's associated benefit a second amount upon
3 receiving notice of a completion of said second qualifying action.

1 53. The method of claim 51, wherein said second qualifying action
2 includes forwarding of said coupon by said primary recipient to a secondary recipient.

1 54. The method of claim 49, wherein said first qualifying action includes a
2 primary recipient receiving said coupon from said initial recipient.

1 55. The method of claim 48, further comprising:
2 crediting a financial account associated with a recipient of said coupon
3 if said benefit of said coupon increases after said recipient has redeemed said
4 coupon.

1 56. The method of claim 48, further comprising at least one of the
2 following:

3 issuing a new coupon to a recipient of said coupon if said benefit of
4 said coupon increases after said recipient has redeemed said coupon; and
5 notifying a recipient of said coupon of a change in benefit of said
6 coupon.

1 57. The method of claim 48, wherein said notice of a completion of said
2 first qualifying action is considered to be received unless a notice is received that said
3 qualifying action has not been completed.

1 58. A method for changing a coupon's benefit, comprising:
2 associating a first qualifying action with a coupon, whereby a benefit
3 for said coupon changes upon completion of said first qualifying action by a
4 first recipient of said coupon; and
5 changing said benefit of said coupon upon receipt of an indication of
6 completion of said first qualifying action by said first recipient.

1 59. The method of claim 58, further comprising at least one of the
2 following:

3 associating an initial benefit with said coupon; and
4 associating said coupon with a recipient.

1 60. The method of claim 58, wherein said notice of completion of said first
2 qualifying action is considered to be received unless a notice is received that said
3 qualifying action has not been completed.

1 61. The method of claim 58, wherein said first qualifying action includes
2 registration of said coupon by said first recipient.

1 62. The method of claim 58, wherein said first qualifying action includes
2 redemption of said coupon by said first recipient.

1 63. The method of claim 58, wherein said first qualifying action includes
2 forwarding of said coupon by said first recipient to a second recipient.

1 64. The method of claim 58, wherein said first qualifying action includes
2 registration of said coupon by a second recipient, said second recipient receiving said
3 coupon from said first recipient.

1 65. The method of claim 58, wherein said first qualifying action includes
2 redemption of said coupon by a second recipient, said second recipient receiving said
3 coupon from said first recipient.

1 66. The method of claim 58, wherein said first qualifying action includes a
2 second recipient receiving said coupon from said first recipient.

1 67. The method of claim 58, further comprising:
2 associating a second qualifying action with a coupon, whereby said
3 benefit for said coupon changes upon completion of said qualifying action by
4 a second recipient of said coupon.

1 68. The method of claim 67, wherein said second qualifying action
2 includes said second recipient forwarding said coupon to a third recipient.

1 69. The method of claim 67, wherein said second qualifying action
2 includes a third recipient receiving said coupon from said second recipient.

1 70. The method of claim 58, further comprising:
2 establishing a recipient variable benefit associated with said first
3 recipient.

1 71. The method of claim 58, further comprising:
2 crediting a financial account associated with said first recipient if said
3 benefit of said coupon increases after said first recipient has redeemed said
4 coupon.

1 72. The method of claim 58, further comprising:
2 issuing a new coupon to said first recipient of said coupon if said
3 benefit of said coupon increases after said first recipient has redeemed said
4 coupon.

1 73. The method of claim 58, further comprising:
2 notifying a recipient of said coupon of a change in benefit of said
3 coupon.

1 74. The method of claim 58, further comprising:
2 notifying a recipient of said coupon after updating said benefit of said
3 coupon.

1 75. A method for providing a coupon having a variable benefit,
2 comprising:
3 generating a coupon having a variable benefit;
4 receiving an indication that a first recipient has received a duplicate of
5 said coupon from a second recipient after said second recipient has redeemed
6 said coupon that; and
7 issuing a new coupon to said second recipient, the new coupon having
8 a benefit corresponding to an incremental benefit said second recipient would
9 have received had said coupon not been redeemed by said second recipient.

1 76. A method for providing a coupon having a variable benefit,
2 comprising:
3 generating a coupon having a variable benefit;
4 receiving an indication that a first recipient has received a duplicate of
5 said coupon from a second recipient after said second recipient has redeemed
6 said coupon that; and
7 crediting a financial account associated with said second recipient an
8 incremental benefit said second recipient would have received had said
9 coupon not been redeemed by said second recipient.

1 77. A method for providing a coupon having a variable benefit,
2 comprising:
3 issuing a coupon having a variable benefit to a first recipient;
4 receiving an indication after a second recipient registers a duplicate of
5 said coupon; and
6 increasing a benefit of said coupon retained by said first recipient after
7 said indication is received.

1 78. A method for providing a coupon having a variable benefit,
2 comprising:
3 issuing a coupon having a variable benefit to a first recipient;
4 receiving an indication after a second recipient redeems a duplicate of
5 said coupon; and
6 increasing a benefit of said coupon retained by said first recipient after
7 said indication is received.

1 79. A method for providing a coupon having a variable benefit,
2 comprising:
3 issuing a coupon having a variable benefit to a first recipient;
4 receiving an indication after a second recipient completes a qualifying
5 action; and
6 increasing a benefit of said coupon retained by said first recipient after
7 said indication is received.

1 80. The method of claim 79, wherein said qualifying action includes at
2 least one of the following:

3 said second recipient receiving said coupon;
4 said second recipient registering said coupon;
5 said second recipient redeeming said coupon; or
6 said second recipient forwarding said coupon.

1 81. A coupon issuing system, comprising:
2 a controller;
3 a storage device coupled to said controller; and

4 software operative to run on said controller to increase a benefit of a
5 coupon in accordance with at least one benefit variation condition.

1 82. A coupon issuing system, comprising:
2 a controller;
3 a storage device coupled to said controller; and
4 software operative to run on said controller to increase a benefit of a
5 coupon retained by a first recipient when an indication is received that a
6 second recipient has registered a duplicate of said coupon received from said
7 first recipient.

1 83. A coupon issuing system, comprising:
2 a controller;
3 a storage device coupled to said controller; and
4 software operative to run on said controller to increase a benefit of a
5 coupon retained by a first recipient when an indication is received that a
6 second recipient has redeemed a duplicate of said coupon received from said
7 first recipient.

1 84. A coupon issuing system, comprising:
2 a controller;
3 a storage device coupled to said controller; and
4 software operative to run on said controller to increase a benefit of a
5 coupon in accordance with benefit variation conditions.

1 85. A coupon issuing system, comprising:
2 a controller;
3 a storage device coupled to said controller; and
4 software operative to run on said controller to increase a benefit of a
5 coupon upon completion of a qualifying action by a recipient of said coupon.

1 86. A method for changing a benefit for a coupon, comprising:
2 establishing benefit variation conditions for a coupon;
3 receiving a request to redeem said coupon; and

4 updating said coupon's benefit in accordance with said benefit
5 variation conditions.

1 87. A method for changing a benefit for a coupon, comprising:
2 establishing benefit variation conditions for a coupon, said benefit
3 variation condition including a qualifying action;
4 determining if said benefit variation conditions for said coupon needs
5 to be modified;
6 receiving a notice of a completion of said qualifying action; and
7 updating said coupon's benefit in accordance with said benefit
8 variation conditions.
9

1 88. A coupon, comprising:
2 a portion of material having indicia representative of at least one
3 qualifying action and a benefit associated with a coupon.

1 89. The coupon of claim 88, further comprising indicia representative of a
2 coupon identifier for said coupon.

1 90. A coupon, comprising:
2 a portion of material having indicia representative of a benefit
3 associated with a coupon and a benefit variation condition associated with said
4 coupon.

1 91. A coupon, comprising:
2 a portion of material having indicia representative of a benefit
3 associated with a coupon and at least one qualifying action associated with
4 said coupon.

1 92. An electronic coupon, comprising:
2 an electronic signal representative of an benefit associated with a
3 coupon and a benefit variation condition associated with said coupon.

1 93. An electronic coupon, comprising:

2 an electronic signal representative of a benefit associated a coupon and
3 at least one qualifying action associated with said coupon.

1 94. A system for changing a benefit for a coupon, comprising:
2 a memory;
3 a communication port; and
4 a processor connected to said memory and said communication port,
5 said processor being operative to:

6 establish an initial benefit for a coupon;
7 establish a benefit variation condition associated with said
8 coupon, said benefit variation condition having at least one associated
9 qualifying action;
10 receive notice of a completion of said at least one qualifying
11 action; and
12 update said coupon's benefit in accordance with said benefit
13 variation condition.

1 95. A system for varying a benefit associated with a coupon, comprising:

2 a memory;
3 a communication port; and
4 a processor connected to said memory and said communication port,
5 said processor being operative to:

6 associate an initial benefit with a coupon;
7 establish a first qualifying action associated with said coupon;
8 and
9 change said coupon's associated benefit a first amount upon
10 receiving notice of a completion of said first qualifying action.

1 96. A method for changing a benefit for a coupon, comprising:

2 establishing an initial benefit for a coupon;
3 establishing a benefit variation condition for said coupon; and
4 updating said coupon's benefit in accordance with said benefit
5 variation condition.

1 97. The method of claim 96, wherein said benefit variation condition
2 includes at least one qualifying action.

1 98. The method of claim 97, further comprising:
2 receiving an indication of a completion of said qualifying action.

1 99. The method of claim 97, wherein said qualifying action includes at
2 least one of the following:

3 a first recipient of said coupon forwarding said coupon to a second
4 recipient;
5 an initial recipient receiving said coupon;
6 a primary recipient receiving said coupon;
7 a secondary recipient receiving said coupon;
8 a tertiary recipient receiving said coupon;
9 a recipient of said coupon registering said coupon; or
10 a recipient of said coupon redeeming said coupon.

1 100. The method of claim 96, wherein said benefit variation condition
2 includes at least one validity duration condition for said coupon.

1 101. The method of claim 96, further comprising:
2 receiving a request to update said coupon's benefit.

1 102. The method of claim 96, further comprising:
2 providing an indication of said coupon's updated benefit.

1 103. The method of claim 96, wherein said establishing a benefit variation
2 condition associated with said coupon includes establishing a maximum benefit for
3 said coupon.

1 104. The method of claim 96, further comprising:
2 issuing said coupon to at least one recipient.

1 105. The method of claim 96, further comprising:

2 tracking recipients of said coupon.

1 106. The method of claim 96, further comprising:
2 tracking at least one hierarchy of recipients of said coupon.

1 107. A method for changing a coupon benefit, comprising:
2 receiving a coupon having an associated benefit and at least one
3 associated qualifying action;
4 performing said qualifying action; and
5 receiving an indication of a change in said benefit associated with said
6 coupon.

1 108. A method for changing a coupon benefit, comprising:
2 receiving a coupon having an associated initial benefit and at least one
3 associated qualifying action;
4 causing a completion of said qualifying action; and
5 receiving an indication of a change in said benefit associated with said
6 coupon.

1 109. A method for redeeming a coupon, comprising:
2 receiving a variable benefit coupon for redemption;
3 requesting a determination of a benefit associated with said variable
4 benefit coupon;
5 receiving an indication of said benefit associated with said variable
6 benefit coupon; and
7 allowing said variable benefit coupon to be redeemed for said indicated
8 benefit.

1 110. A method for redeeming a coupon, comprising:
2 receiving a request to redeem a variable benefit coupon;
3 requesting a determination of a benefit associated with said variable
4 benefit coupon;
5 receiving an indication of said benefit associated with said variable
6 benefit coupon; and

7 allowing said variable benefit coupon to be redeemed for said indicated
8 benefit.

1 111. A method for redeeming a coupon, comprising:
2 receiving a request to redeem a variable benefit coupon;
3 providing a notice of a receipt of said request;
4 receiving an indication of said benefit associated with said variable
5 benefit coupon; and
6 allowing said variable benefit coupon to be redeemed for said indicated
7 benefit.

1 112. A method of using a computer system for providing a coupon having a
2 variable benefit, comprising:

3 generating a coupon having a variable benefit, wherein a duplicate of said
4 coupon is transmitted to a first recipient from a second recipient;
5 receiving an indication that at least one of said second recipient or said
6 first recipient has completed a qualifying action; and
7 changing a benefit of said coupon retained by said second recipient
8 after said indication is received.

1 113. The method of claim 112, further comprising:
2 determining whether said second recipient received a duplicate of the
3 coupon from a third recipient, said third recipient retaining a respective benefit
4 of said coupon; and
5 changing the benefit of said third recipient's coupon after said second
6 recipient has received the duplicate of said coupon from said third recipient.

1 114. The method of claim 112, further comprising:
2 determining at least one prior recipient that has indirectly forwarded a
3 duplicate of said coupon to the said first recipient, the at least one recipient has
4 a respective benefit of the coupon; and
5 changing the benefit of the coupon of each prior recipient that has
6 indirectly forwarded the duplicate of the coupon to the first recipient.

1 115. The method of claim 114, wherein changing the benefit of each prior
2 recipient comprises:

3 changing, for each prior recipient, the benefit of said coupon by an
4 amount that is based on a number of intervening recipients between the at least
5 one prior recipient and said first recipient.

1 116. The method of claim 114, further comprising:

2 adjusting, for each at least one prior recipient, said coupon's benefit to
3 equal a predetermined maximum benefit if the coupon's benefit exceeds the
4 predetermined maximum benefit.

1 117. The method of claim 112, further comprising:

2 assigning an initial benefit to the duplicate of the coupon received by
3 the first recipient.

1 118. The method of claim 117, further comprising:

2 receiving a forward indication when said first recipient has forwarded a
3 duplicate of said coupon to a new recipient;

4 changing the benefit of said coupon retained by said second recipient
5 when said forward indication is received; and

6 changing the initial benefit of said coupon retained by the first
7 recipient to obtain a first recipient benefit when said forward indication is
8 received.

1 119. The method of claim 112, further comprising:

2 arranging said first recipient and said second recipient in a hierarchy,
3 said hierarchy having the first recipient at an immediate lower level than said
4 second recipient;

5 determining a number of levels lower than said immediate lower level
6 of said second recipient in said hierarchy, wherein each of said number of
7 levels has at least one downstream recipient with a benefit of said coupon, and
8 wherein the duplicate of said coupon is forwarded from said first recipient via
9 each downstream recipient; and

10 changing the respective benefit of said coupon retained by each
11 downstream recipient as the duplicate of said coupon is forwarded to
12 descending levels in the hierarchy.

1 120. The method of claim 119, wherein said changing the respective benefit
2 of said coupon of each downstream recipient comprises:

3 changing the respective benefit of the coupon retained by each
4 downstream recipient by an amount based on a position of each respective
5 downstream recipient in said hierarchy relative to at least one upstream
6 recipient in said hierarchy.

1 121. The method of claim 119, further comprising:

2 arranging an initial recipient to whom said coupon is initially received
3 at a topmost level of said hierarchy, said hierarchy having no more than a
4 predetermined number of levels below the topmost level.

1 122. The method of claim 119, further comprising:

2 determining a primary number of primary downstream recipients
3 having completed a primary required activity, each of said primary
4 downstream recipients receiving said coupon from said first recipient;

5 multiplying the primary number by a primary recipient increase benefit
6 to obtain a primary recipient total benefit;

7 determining a secondary number of secondary downstream recipients
8 having completed a secondary required activity, each of said secondary
9 downstream recipients receiving the duplicate of said coupon from at least one
10 of said primary downstream recipients;

11 multiplying the secondary number by a secondary recipient increase
12 benefit to obtain a secondary recipient total benefit;

13 determining a tertiary number of tertiary downstream recipients having
14 completed a tertiary required activity, each of said tertiary downstream
15 recipients receiving the duplicate of said coupon from at least one of said
16 secondary downstream recipients;

17 multiplying the tertiary number by a tertiary recipient increase benefit
18 to obtain a tertiary recipient total benefit; and

19 updating a first benefit of said coupon of said first recipient, wherein
20 the updated first benefit is proportional to a sum of said primary, secondary
21 and tertiary recipient total benefits.

1 123. The method of claim 122, wherein the primary required activity, the
2 secondary required activity and the tertiary required activity include at least one of
3 forwarding the coupon to a downstream recipient, registering said coupon, and
4 redeeming the coupon.

1 124. The method of claim 112, further comprising:
2 arranging said first recipient and said second recipient in a hierarchy,
3 said hierarchy having a plurality of levels wherein said second recipient is at a
4 level in said hierarchy that is immediately higher than a level of said first
5 recipient;
6 determining a number of levels in said hierarchy that are higher than
7 the level of said second recipient, wherein when said number of levels exceeds
8 one, each of said number of levels in said hierarchy has a prior recipient
9 having a respective benefit of said coupon; and
10 changing the respective benefit of said coupon retained by each prior
11 recipient.

1 125. A method of using a computer system for providing a coupon having a
2 variable benefit, comprising:
3 issuing a coupon having a variable benefit to an initial recipient;
4 receiving an indication after a new recipient receives a duplicate of
5 said coupon issued to said initial recipient of the coupon; and
6 changing a benefit of said coupon retained by said initial recipient each
7 time said indication is received.

1 126. The method of claim 125, wherein said changing a benefit of said
2 coupon retained by the initial recipient each time said indication is received
3 comprises:
4 determining after said indication is received whether said new recipient
5 has previously received said coupon; and

6 changing the benefit of said coupon retained by the initial recipient if
7 said new recipient has not previously received said coupon.

1 127. The method of claim 125, wherein said changing comprises:
2 changing the benefit of said coupon retained by the initial recipient by
3 an amount based on a number of intervening recipients between said new
4 recipient and said initial recipient.

1 128. The method of claim 125, further comprising:
2 assigning an initial benefit to said coupon received by a first new
3 recipient;
4 receiving a forward indication when said first new recipient has
5 forwarded a duplicate of said coupon to a second new recipient;
6 changing, after said forward indication is received, said initial benefit
7 of said coupon retained by said first new recipient to obtain a first new
8 recipient benefit; and
9 changing the benefit of said coupon retained by the initial recipient
10 after said forward indication is received.

1 129. A method of using a computer system for providing a coupon having a
2 variable benefit, comprising:
3 generating a coupon having a variable benefit;
4 receiving an indication that a first recipient has redeemed a duplicate
5 of said coupon received from a second recipient of said coupon; and
6 changing a benefit of said coupon retained by said second recipient
7 after said indication is received.

1 130. A method of using a computer system for providing a coupon having a
2 variable benefit, comprising:
3 generating a coupon having a variable benefit;
4 changing a benefit of said coupon retained by a first recipient each
5 time an indication is received that a new recipient has registered to receive a
6 duplicate of said coupon issued to said first recipient; and
7 issuing said coupon to the new recipient.

1 131. A method of using a computer system for providing a coupon having a
2 variable benefit, comprising:

3 (a) issuing a coupon having a variable benefit to a first recipient;
4 (b) receiving a first forward indication that said first recipient has
5 forwarded a duplicate of the coupon to a new recipient;
6 (c) determining whether said new recipient has previously received
7 said coupon;
8 (d) changing the benefit of said coupon retained by said first recipient
9 when said new recipient has not previously received said coupon;
10 (e) receiving a second forward indication that said new recipient has
11 forwarded a duplicate of said coupon to a subsequent recipient;
12 (f) determining whether said subsequent recipient has previously
13 received a duplicate of said coupon;
14 (g) changing the benefit of said coupon retained by said first recipient
15 when said subsequent recipient has not previously received said coupon; and
16 (h) changing a new benefit of said coupon retained by said new
17 recipient when said subsequent recipient has not previously received said
18 coupon.

1 132. The method of claim 131, further comprising:

2 repeating (b) through (d) each time said first forward indication is
3 received; and
4 repeating (e) through (h) each time said second forward indication is
5 received.

1 133. The method of claim 131, wherein said changing the benefit of said
2 coupon retained by said first recipient when said new recipient has not previously
3 received said coupon comprises;

4 determining whether a number of said new recipients that have not
5 previously received said coupon exceeds a maximum number; and
6 adjusting said benefit of said coupon retained by said first recipient to
7 equal a predetermined maximum benefit corresponding to said number if the
8 benefit exceeds said predetermined maximum benefit.

1 134. The method of claim 131, wherein said changing a new benefit of said
2 coupon retained by said new recipient when said subsequent recipient has not
3 previously received said coupon comprises:

4 determining whether a number of subsequent recipients that have not
5 previously received said coupon exceeds a maximum number; and

6 adjusting the benefit of said coupon retained by said new recipient to
7 equal a predetermined maximum benefit corresponding to said number if the
8 benefit exceeds said predetermined maximum benefit.

1 135. The method of claim 131, further comprising:

2 updating the benefit of said coupon retained by said first recipient,
3 wherein the benefit corresponds to a sum of an initial benefit of said coupon
4 and an amount by which said initial benefit of said coupon retained by said
5 first recipient has been increased.

1 136. An apparatus for providing a coupon having a variable benefit,
2 comprising:

3 a server coupled to at least one output device for issuing a coupon
4 having a variable benefit to a first recipient, wherein said server is operable to
5 increase a benefit of said coupon retained by said first recipient when an
6 indication is received that a second recipient has received a duplicate of said
7 coupon from said first recipient.

1 137. A coupon issuing system, comprising:

2 a controller;

3 a storage device coupled to said controller; and

4 software operative to run on said controller to increase a benefit of a
5 coupon retained by a first recipient when an indication is received that a
6 second recipient has received a duplicate of said coupon from said first
7 recipient.

8 issuing a coupon having a variable benefit, wherein a duplicate of the
9 coupon is transmitted from one recipient to another recipient;

10 receiving an indication that a first recipient has received the duplicate
11 of the coupon from a second recipient of the coupon; and
12 changing the benefit of the coupon retained by the second recipient
13 when the indication is received.

1 138. A method of using a computer system for redeeming a coupon having
2 a variable benefit, comprising:

3 receiving a coupon identifier of a coupon;
4 receiving a recipient identifier corresponding to a recipient of the
5 coupon;
6 determining a benefit of said coupon corresponding to said recipient
7 identifier; and
8 processing a request to redeem said coupon using said benefit.

1 139. The method of claim 138, further comprising the step of:
2 verifying the validity of said coupon.

1 140. The method of claim 138, wherein said determining a benefit of said
2 coupon comprises:

3 accessing a database storing information related to said coupon; and
4 retrieving the redemption benefit of said coupon corresponding to said
5 recipient identifier from said database.

1 141. The method of claim 138, wherein said determining the benefit of said
2 coupon comprises:

3 accessing a web site storing information related to said coupon; and
4 retrieving the benefit of said coupon corresponding to said recipient
5 identifier from said web site.

1 142. The method of claim 139, wherein said processing said request
2 comprises:

3 applying the benefit to a purchase price of an item corresponding to
4 said coupon.

1 143. The method of claim 139, wherein said determining the benefit of said
2 coupon comprises determining a benefit of said coupon in accordance with benefit
3 variation conditions.

1 144. A computer readable medium for use in a coupon system, the computer
2 readable medium storing a computer program comprising:

3 computer readable means for creating an initial benefit for a coupon;
4 computer readable means for creating a benefit variation condition for
5 said coupon, said benefit variation condition having at least one associated
6 qualifying action;

7 computer readable means for receiving notice of a completion of said
8 at least one qualifying action; and

9 computer readable means for changing said coupon's benefit in
10 accordance with said benefit variation condition.

1 145. An article of manufacture, comprising:

2 a computer usable medium having a computer readable program means
3 embodied therein for operating an information system, the computer readable
4 program means in said article of manufacture operable to:

5 establish an initial benefit for a coupon;

6 establish a benefit variation condition for said coupon, said
7 benefit variation condition having at least one associated qualifying
8 action;

9 receive notice of a completion of said at least one qualifying
10 action; and

11 update said coupon's benefit in accordance with said benefit
12 variation condition.

1 146. An apparatus for changing a benefit associated with a coupon,
2 comprising:

3 means for creating an initial benefit for a coupon;

4 means for creating a benefit variation condition for said coupon, said
5 benefit variation condition having at least one associated qualifying action;

6 means for receiving notice of a completion of said at least one
7 qualifying action; and

8 means for changing said coupon's benefit in accordance with said
9 benefit variation condition.

1 147. A computer readable medium for use in a coupon system, the computer
2 readable medium storing a computer program comprising:

3 computer readable means for associating an initial benefit with a
4 coupon;

5 computer readable means for associating a first qualifying action with
6 said coupon; and

7 computer readable means for changing said coupon's associated
8 benefit a first amount upon receiving notice of a completion of said first
9 qualifying action.

1 148. An article of manufacture, comprising:

2 a computer usable medium having a computer readable program means
3 embodied therein for operating an information system, the computer readable
4 program means in said article of manufacture operable to:

5 associate an initial benefit with a coupon;

6 establish a first qualifying action associated with said coupon;
7 and

8 change said coupon's associated benefit a first amount upon
9 receiving notice of a completion of said first qualifying action.

1 149. An apparatus for changing a benefit associated with a coupon,
2 comprising:

3 means for associating an initial benefit with a coupon;

4 means for creating a first qualifying action associated with said
5 coupon; and

6 means for modifying said coupon's associated benefit a first amount
7 upon receiving notice of a completion of said first qualifying action.

1 150. A system for changing a benefit associated with a coupon, comprising:

2 a memory;
3 a communication port; and
4 a processor connected to said memory and said communication port,
5 said processor being operative to:

6 associate a first qualifying action with a coupon, whereby a
7 benefit for said coupon changes upon completion of said first
8 qualifying action by a first recipient of said coupon; and
9 change said benefit of said coupon upon receipt of an indication
10 of completion of said first qualifying action by said first recipient.

1 151. A computer readable medium for use in a coupon system, the computer
2 readable medium storing a computer program comprising:

3 computer readable means for creating a first qualifying action
4 associated with a coupon, whereby a benefit for said coupon changes upon
5 completion of said first qualifying action by a first recipient of said coupon;
6 and

7 computer readable means for modifying said benefit of said coupon
8 upon receipt of an indication of completion of said first qualifying action by
9 said first recipient.

1 152. An article of manufacture, comprising:

2 a computer usable medium having a computer readable program means
3 embodied therein for operating an information system, the computer readable
4 program means in said article of manufacture operable to:

5 associate a first qualifying action with a coupon, whereby a
6 benefit for said coupon changes upon completion of said first
7 qualifying action by a first recipient of said coupon; and
8 change said benefit of said coupon upon receipt of an indication
9 of completion of said first qualifying action by said first recipient.

1 153. An apparatus for changing a benefit associated with a coupon,
2 comprising:

3 means for establishing a first qualifying action associated with a
4 coupon, whereby a benefit for said coupon changes upon completion of said
5 first qualifying action by a first recipient of said coupon; and

6 means for modifying said benefit of said coupon upon receipt of an
7 indication of completion of said first qualifying action by said first recipient.

9 154. A system for changing a benefit associated with a coupon, comprising:
10 a memory;
11 a communication port; and
12 a processor connected to said memory and said communication port,
13 said processor being operative to:

14 generate a coupon having a variable benefit;

15 receive an indication that a first recipient has received a
16 duplicate of said coupon from a second recipient after said second
17 recipient has redeemed said coupon that; and

18 issue a new coupon to said second recipient, the new coupon
19 having a benefit corresponding to an incremental benefit said second
20 recipient would have received had said coupon not been redeemed by
21 said second recipient.

1 155. A computer readable medium for use in a coupon system, the computer
2 readable medium storing a computer program comprising:

3 computer readable means for creating a coupon having a variable
4 benefit;

5 computer readable means for receiving an indication that a first
6 recipient has received a duplicate of said coupon from a second recipient after
7 said second recipient has redeemed said coupon that; and

8 computer readable means for providing a new coupon to said second
9 recipient, the new coupon having a benefit corresponding to an incremental
10 benefit said second recipient would have received had said coupon not been
11 redeemed by said second recipient.

1 156. An article of manufacture, comprising:

2 a computer usable medium having a computer readable program means
3 embodied therein for operating an information system, the computer readable
4 program means in said article of manufacture operable to:

5 generate a coupon having a variable benefit;
6 receive an indication that a first recipient has received a
7 duplicate of said coupon from a second recipient after said second
8 recipient has redeemed said coupon that; and
9 issue a new coupon to said second recipient, the new coupon
10 having a benefit corresponding to an incremental benefit said second
11 recipient would have received had said coupon not been redeemed by
12 said second recipient.

1 157. An apparatus for changing a benefit associated with a coupon,
2 comprising:

3 means for creating a coupon having a variable benefit;
4 means for receiving an indication that a first recipient has received a
5 duplicate of said coupon from a second recipient after said second recipient
6 has redeemed said coupon that; and
7 means for providing a new coupon to said second recipient, the new
8 coupon having a benefit corresponding to an incremental benefit said second
9 recipient would have received had said coupon not been redeemed by said
10 second recipient.

1 158. A system for changing a benefit associated with a coupon, comprising:
2 a memory;
3 a communication port; and
4 a processor connected to said memory and said communication port,
5 said processor being operative to:

6 generate a coupon having a variable benefit, wherein a duplicate of
7 said coupon is transmitted to a first recipient from a second recipient;
8 receive an indication that at least one of said second recipient
9 or said first recipient has completed a qualifying action; and
10 change a benefit of said coupon retained by said second
11 recipient after said indication is received.

12

13 159. A computer readable medium for use in a coupon system, the computer
14 readable medium storing a computer program comprising:

15 computer readable means for creating a coupon having a variable
16 benefit, wherein a duplicate of said coupon is transmitted to a first recipient
17 from a second recipient;

18 computer readable means for receiving an indication that at least one
19 of said second recipient or said first recipient has completed a qualifying
20 action; and

21 computer readable means for modifying a benefit of said coupon
22 retained by said second recipient after said indication is received.

23

24 160. An article of manufacture, comprising:

25 a computer usable medium having a computer readable program means
26 embodied therein for operating an information system, the computer readable
27 program means in said article of manufacture operable to:

28 generate a coupon having a variable benefit, wherein a duplicate of
29 said coupon is transmitted to a first recipient from a second recipient;

30 receive an indication that at least one of said second recipient
31 or said first recipient has completed a qualifying action; and

32 change a benefit of said coupon retained by said second
33 recipient after said indication is received.

1 161. An apparatus for changing a benefit associated with a coupon,
2 comprising:

3 means for creating a coupon having a variable benefit, wherein a
4 duplicate of said coupon is transmitted to a first recipient from a second
5 recipient;

6 means for receiving an indication that at least one of said second
7 recipient or said first recipient has completed a qualifying action; and

8 means for modifying a benefit of said coupon retained by said second
9 recipient after said indication is received.

1 162. A method for changing a benefit associated with a coupon, comprising:

2 establishing an initial benefit for a coupon;
3 establishing a benefit variation condition for said coupon, said benefit
4 variation condition having at least one associated qualifying action; and
5 updating said coupon's benefit in accordance with said benefit
6 variation condition unless a notice is received that said at least one qualifying
7 action has not been completed.

1 163. A method for changing a benefit associated with a coupon, comprising:
2 establishing an initial benefit for a coupon;
3 establishing a benefit variation condition for said coupon, said benefit
4 variation condition having at least one associated qualifying action; and
5 updating said coupon's benefit in accordance with said benefit
6 variation condition unless a determination is made that said at least one
7 qualifying action has not been completed.

1 164. A method for varying a benefit associated with a coupon, comprising:
2 associating an initial benefit with a coupon;
3 establishing a first qualifying action associated with said coupon; and
4 changing said coupon's associated benefit a first amount unless a
5 notice is received that said first qualifying action has not been completed.

1 165. A method for varying a benefit associated with a coupon, comprising:
2 associating an initial benefit with a coupon;
3 establishing a first qualifying action associated with said coupon; and
4 changing said coupon's associated benefit a first amount unless a
5 determination is made that said first qualifying action has not been completed.

1 166. A method for changing a coupon's benefit, comprising:
2 associating a first qualifying action with a coupon, whereby a benefit
3 for said coupon changes upon completion of said first qualifying action by a
4 first recipient of said coupon; and
5 changing said benefit of said coupon unless a notice is received that
6 said first qualifying action has not been completed.

1 167. A method for changing a coupon's benefit, comprising:
2 associating a first qualifying action with a coupon, whereby a benefit
3 for said coupon changes upon completion of said first qualifying action by a
4 first recipient of said coupon; and
5 changing said benefit of said coupon unless a determination is made,
6 that said first qualifying action has not been completed.